

## PARTHIA \*

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THE Kingdom of Parthia emerged as a result of the socio-economic crisis affecting the Seleucid state in the mid-third century B.C.<sup>1</sup> In the course of that crisis the governors of the extreme eastern satrapies – Diodotus in Bactria and Andragoras in Parthia – seceded from the Seleucid kingdom. While in Bactria an independent Graeco-Bactrian kingdom came into being, the situation in Parthia was much troubled by incursions of nomads belonging to the confederation of the Parni who had occupied land along the edges of the agricultural oases from the Caspian Sea to the River Tedzhen. The Parni, with Arsaces at their head, invaded Parthia. In the ensuing struggle Andragoras was killed and control of the country passed to the nomadic aristocracy of the Parni headed by Arsaces.<sup>2</sup> The Parni soon seized Hyrcania (a region on the southern and south-eastern Caspian seaboard), and this boosted the economic and military potential of the infant state.

### Parthia and the Seleucids

The Parthian kingdom still had to survive a stubborn struggle with the Seleucids before its independence was firmly established. Between 230 and 227 B.C. the Seleucid king Seleucus II undertook a campaign to recover his eastern satrapies. The Seleucid troops were initially successful, but the Parthians, backed by the nomadic tribes (Apasiacae), finally carried the day when the revolts which had broken out in regions to the west of the Seleucid Empire prevented Seleucus from continuing the war. The next stage in the struggle with the Seleucids took place during the reign of Antiochus III. In 209 B.C. he began his famous Eastern

\* See Map 3.

1. D'yakonov, 1961, pp. 180 et seq.

2. Koshelenko, 1976, pp. 31–7.

campaign, which resulted in the defeat of Parthia and forced Artabanus (Ardavān in Middle Persian) to recognize Seleucid overlordship. But when the Romans defeated the Seleucids in the battle of Magnesia (192 B.C.) the Parthians were able to take advantage of the situation and reconquered the provinces south of the Caspian Sea. Parthia again became independent and was able to resume its expansion both eastward and westward. This was made easier by the fact that the Graeco-Bactrian and Seleucid kingdoms lacked political stability and were open to bitter internal strife. The Parthian ruler Mithradates I (171–139 B.C.) made clever use of these favourable circumstances. In the east he attacked Bactria and took from it a number of dependent regions.<sup>3</sup> Media was then captured – a conquest that opened the way for the Parthians to the west and south, towards Mesopotamia, Susiana and Elymais. The political chaos in these regions enabled the Parthians to invade central Mesopotamia in 141 B.C. and seize that major centre of the Hellenistic east, Seleucia on the Tigris. After this Susa also came under their suzerainty.<sup>4</sup> These conquests, however, presented the Parthians with a very complex problem. The new territories that came under their control contained important concentrations of Greek and Hellenized inhabitants, who were now deprived of the privileged position they had enjoyed in the Seleucid Empire. For the next two centuries the Greek cities within the Parthian state were the main opposition forces, hostile to central rule. Counting on the support of this Greek population, the Seleucid ruler Demetrius II attempted to recover Mesopotamia in 140 B.C. but was unsuccessful. There was a further Seleucid attempt to subdue Parthia in 131/130 B.C. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus VII Sidetes, relying on the support of the Greek cities, inflicted severe defeats on the Parthians and penetrated into the innermost regions of Parthia. But eventually the Seleucid forces were routed and Antiochus VII himself was killed in battle in 129 B.C. This was a turning point in the history of Hellenistic Central Asia. The Seleucid state ceased to exist as a world power and its kings became the petty rulers of rival warring states in northern Syria.<sup>5</sup>

The Parthians recovered all the lands they had earlier lost and the way westward into Syria now lay open to them. At that time, however, the situation was once more aggravated on the eastern borders of Parthia. The major movement of nomadic tribes in Central Asia which had brought about the downfall of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom (between 140 and 130 B.C.) was bound to affect Parthia as well. In 130 B.C. the Saka tribes invaded the eastern regions of Parthia and individual detachments penetrated as far as Mesopotamia. The Parthian king Phraates II lost his life in the struggle against the nomads (129 B.C.), as did his successor and uncle, Artabanus I (123 B.C.).<sup>6</sup> Parthia also faced

3. Koshelenko, 1972.

4. Le Rider, 1965.

5. Fischer, 1970.

6. Debevoise, 1938, pp. 35–8.

substantial problems in the west where Hyspaosines, King of Characene (a small region on the northern shore of the Persian Gulf), had seized most of Mesopotamia. Thus after a period of resounding success against the Seleucids, Parthia found itself on the verge of collapse.

## Mithradates II and his successors

Mithradates II (123–87 B.C.) managed to stabilize this difficult situation. He was able to subjugate Characene and re-establish calm in the Greek cities. Parthia followed a more moderate policy towards the Greeks than hitherto, and they, now lacking any support from the west, became much more reconciled to Parthian rule.

The problem of the nomads on the eastern front was solved by a mixture of military means and diplomacy. They were displaced from Parthian territory proper and settled around Lake Hamun on the lands of Arachosia and Drangiana – the region later called Segistan (modern Sistan). The emerging petty states under nomadic leaders came very much within the Parthian sphere of influence, and some of them became vassal dependencies. Parthian influence in the east was considerably extended and came to include the greater part of modern western Afghanistan.<sup>7</sup>

From the beginning of the first century B.C. the Parthian state had achieved unprecedented strength and had become the foremost power in Western Asia. But the latter years of the reign of Mithradates II were marked by further complications: the struggle for power between various representatives of the Arsacid house; the interference in Parthian affairs of the Armenian kingdom; and the relentless eastward expansion of Rome. The first century B.C. saw repeated military conflict between Rome and Parthia, as well as clashes between old rivals who were meddling in each other's internal disputes.

## The pattern of decline

During this period there were two major political forces in Parthia, and the struggle between them had a profound influence on the course of Parthian history as well as on relations between Rome and Parthia.<sup>8</sup> One group consisted of the leaders of the Greek and local towns of Mesopotamia and the Parthian aristocracy who had settled there. The major force in the coalition was provided by the Greek towns. The eastern progress of the Romans gave the Greeks new

7. Sarianidi and Koshelenko, 1982.

8. Koshelenko, 1963, pp. 56–8.

hope. They were attracted by Rome's call to defend 'Hellenism' from 'barbarism' and the prospect of social peace secured by the Roman legions. In a region with age-old traditions of slavery, the ruling classes of both the Greek and eastern towns (which were close in character to Greek city-states) saw orthodox slave-holding as the main source of their enrichment. Constant wars, which disrupted economic activity, halted trade and led to disturbances and uncertainty, were equally unwelcome.

The second group consisted of the nobility of the purely Iranian regions, and was closely linked with the peripheral nomadic tribes. This section of the Parthian ruling class wished to pursue a broad expansionist policy, and with the ordinary fighting men dependent on them, formed the nucleus of Parthia's armed forces. They looked to enrichment from major conquests. Their popular slogans were 'the return of the Achaemenid heritage' and 'the conquest of all Asia'.

## The Romans and the Parthians

The series of wars between the Romans and the Parthians took place against the background of active conflict between these two groups of the ruling class of Parthia, with the Romans actively supporting those claimants to the Arsacid throne put forward by the 'Western' group. The major wars between the Romans and the Parthians in the first century B.C. were indecisive. In 53 B.C. the Romans faced a humiliating defeat at Carrhae in Mesopotamia; the Parthian invasion of the West in 40 B.C. ended in their disastrous defeat at the battle of Gindara (38 B.C.); and a further Roman invasion under Mark Antony in 36 B.C. failed likewise. At the end of the Roman civil war in 29 B.C., when Octavian became the first Roman emperor – Augustus – Rome's Eastern policy underwent important changes. The aggression that had marked the period of the Republic gave way to a quest for peace. One of the main reasons for this was the realization that Rome lacked the military resources for any large-scale conquests in the East. Parthia thus played an outstanding role in the history of the East by halting Roman aggression. The new Roman policy of peace also coincided with the interests of Parthia, which was not strong enough to undertake major conquests in the West. However, Rome's changed policy in the East did not signify an end to attempts to interfere in the domestic affairs of Parthia. It was a period of intense conflict between the two groups of Parthia's ruling class. The Romans actively took sides in the dispute, supporting the candidate who was most favourable to their own interests in Parthia. Their success in placing Vonones on the Arsacid throne was a considerable achievement for Roman diplomacy; but the pro-Roman policy of Vonones brought about a reaction which consolidated all the 'patriotic' forces, under Artabanus II, founder of the Later Arsacid dynasty. His main support came from the eastern regions of

Parthia and he had close links with neighbouring nomadic tribes. His supporters opposed the transformation of Parthia into a Roman vassal and viewed the conflict with Rome as a struggle to restore the power of Cyrus, the Achaemenid. In domestic policy Artabanus II sought to limit the self-rule of the Greek towns. In cultural matters there was a reorientation towards ancient Iranian traditions, and the Hellenistic cultural heritage was rejected.

## Successors of Artabanus

Although the reign of Artabanus II was an important landmark in the history of Parthia, being marked by significant political and cultural changes in the Arsacid state, it did not mean an end to internal conflicts. For many years after the death of Artabanus, wars were waged between two of his successors, Vardanes and Gotarzes. Some stability was achieved under Vologases I, who conducted an active foreign policy and sought to restore Parthian control over Armenia. The long and variable struggle between Rome and Parthia over this ended with an agreement in A.D. 63 that the brother of the Parthian king Vologases should be proclaimed King of Armenia and crowned in Rome by the Roman emperor Nero. This agreement was extremely important since it led to a long period of peace on the frontier between Rome and Parthia interrupted by only minor disputes.

## Later Roman-Parthian relations

Peace was next broken in A.D. 114 when the Roman emperor Trajan began his carefully prepared campaign against Parthia.<sup>9</sup> The Romans initially had considerable success, capturing Ctesiphon, the capital of Parthia. The Roman army marched to the Persian Gulf, and the Roman fleet sailed down the Tigris. The success of the Romans owed much to the bitter conflicts within Parthian society between rival claimants to the Arsacid throne, and to the revolts that had broken out in Elymais and Persia. But at the height of the Roman success the situation radically changed. In all the Parthian territories conquered by the Romans, insurrections broke out, triggered off by the introduction of the Roman system of provincial administration, which strictly controlled towns, taxes and requisitions, and by the discontent of the petty rulers who had recognized Rome's authority and had subsequently been stripped of the remnants of their independence. The rival representatives of the Arsacid house united against the invader and in A.D. 117 the Romans were compelled to abandon all

9. Lepper, 1979.

their conquests in Parthia. Although the Roman frontier was peaceful again, Parthia was still not secure and faced severe complications on its northern and eastern borders. It appears that Hyrcania finally achieved independence; the separatist trends of other regions of the state became more marked; and Parthia's northern provinces suffered incursions from the Alani. The emergence and growth of the powerful Kushan Empire created a permanent danger in the East. Exhausted by internecine wars and constant difficulties with Rome, Parthia sought to reduce tension in the East to a minimum. The stumbling block in relations between Rome and Parthia, however, remained Armenia, where in the time of Vologases III there was a bitter clash in A.D. 161–63. The northern flank of the Roman defence collapsed and Parthian troops invaded Syria. Rome, alarmed that there might be a general uprising against its rule in the East, mustered its strength to stabilize the situation and then to launch a counter-offensive. The peace treaty concluded at the end of the war was harsh for the Parthians, since the whole of Mesopotamia as far as the River Khabur was ceded to Rome. Even harsher for Parthia were the consequences of the war which broke out in A.D. 195. The Parthians had supported Pescennius Niger in the Roman civil war. The Romans found that Vologases IV (A.D. 191–207), who seemed to have invaded eastern Iran, had at the same time to oppose the large-scale revolts that had broken out in Media and Persia. The Roman military expedition dealt a heavy blow to Parthia: the richest parts of the country were devastated and some 100,000 inhabitants were taken to Syria and sold into slavery. The last war between Rome and Parthia began in A.D. 216. The conflict between Vologases V and Artabanus V, the two pretenders to the Parthian throne, made the conditions ripe for Roman intervention. The Romans, under their emperor Caracalla, invaded Parthian territory and laid waste much of Mesopotamia and part of Media. In the summer of A.D. 217, Artabanus V, who had mustered sizeable forces, started to wage a resolute campaign against the Romans. Caracalla fell at the hands of conspirators and Macrinus became emperor. After a decisive battle at Nisibis the Romans had to sue for peace. However, this was the Parthians' last success. The ruler of Persia, Ardashir, united with a number of other local rulers to raise a revolt against the Arsacids. In 223 he defeated and killed Vologases V. A few years later Artabanus V was defeated and killed at the battle of Hormizdagan, and the entire territory of the Arsacids soon passed into the hands of the new dynasty of the Sasanians.<sup>10</sup>

## Socio-economic systems

The Parthian period saw considerable economic development in the countries that made up the Arsacid state. Archaeological investigations on the Susa plain,

10. Lukonin, 1961.

in the Diyala valley, the Kopet Dag foothills and elsewhere in Parthia<sup>11</sup> indicate that there was a sharp increase in the number and size of settlements (Figs. 1–4) and in the extent of irrigated land, compared with the preceding period. The basis of Parthia's economy was agriculture; and irrigated cultivation was broadly developed in most parts of Parthia. Cereals were grown and there were large areas of vineyards and gardens. Technical crops such as cotton and sesame were well known. At the confines of the cultivated land many nomadic tribes were engaged in cattle-raising. It seems likely that good relations were established between the inhabitants of the oases and the nomadic cattle-raisers, though a number of tribes, chiefly in mountain areas, still led a communal existence within a natural economy.



FIG. 1. Site of Nisa. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)

## Trade and commerce

Crafts were well developed in Parthia. Some items gained international recognition, including lined fabric from Borsippa (in Babylonia), carpets from the indigenous areas of Parthia, and the iron of Margiana (particularly in the form of weapons and armour). In the Parthian period trade and monetary relations were also developed. Parthia took part in extensive international trade and had trad-

11. Wenke, 1975/76.



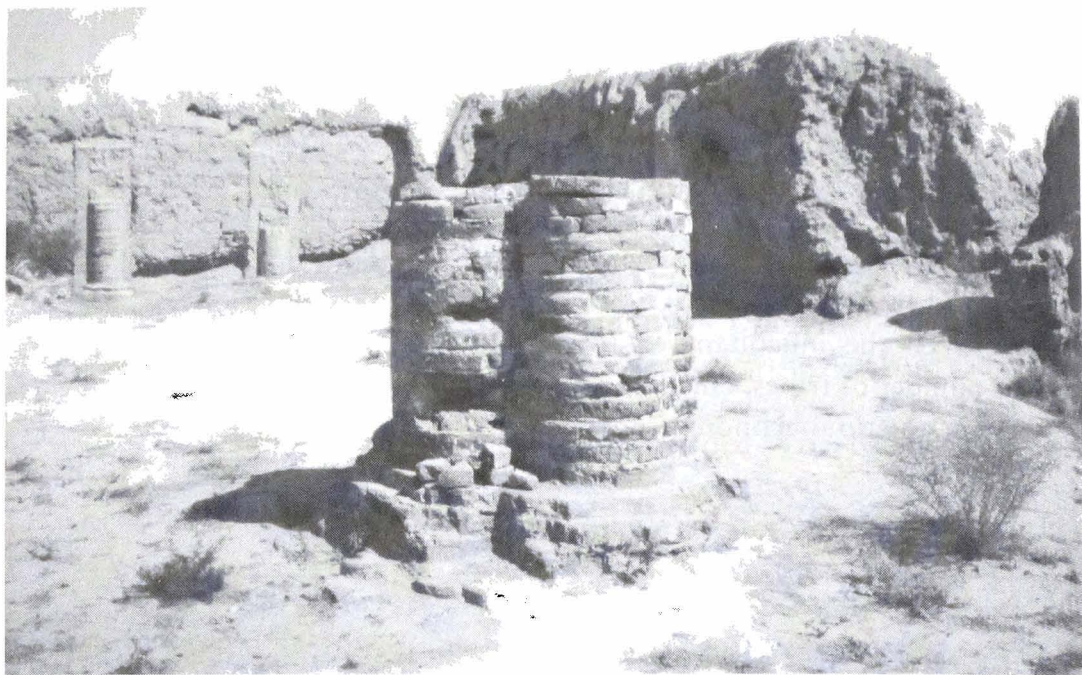


FIG. 2. Nisa. Throne-room. (Courtesy of I. Iskender-Mochiri.)

ing links with the Roman Empire, mainly via Palmyra, which served as a kind of 'buffer' and acted as a commercial intermediary. Palmyrene caravans went both to the various towns of Parthia and to the coastal towns of Syria.<sup>12</sup> The great quantities of Parthian coins (particularly from the first century A.D.) found in Transcaucasia suggest that Parthia maintained fairly close ties with those regions. Trade with India was conducted both by sea, via Spasinu-Charax on the Persian Gulf, and overland via southern Iran or from Merv by the south-east portion of the 'royal way' leading to India via Sistan and Kandahar. In the Indian trade there was constant competition between the Parthians and the Romans, who carried goods mainly by sea via the Red Sea ports. A special role in international trade was played by the 'Silk Route', which linked the countries of the Far East and the Mediterranean through Central Asia. As Parthia controlled much of the route and was able to enjoy a monopoly of its trade, Parthian merchants made huge profits by reselling Chinese wares, mainly silk, on the markets of the Roman Empire. The Parthian administration therefore tried to prevent direct contacts between Chinese and Roman merchants. This intermediary trade enriched the Parthian merchant class, and the state obtained a substantial revenue from trading dues. Archaeological finds from Seleucia on the Tigris and written records point to the existence of taxes on trade in slaves,

12. Koshelenko, 1971*b*, pp. 761–5.



salt and other items.<sup>13</sup> Local trade also developed and local markets were established, as attested by the vast quantity of small bronze coins minted to meet the needs of those markets. The process was most in evidence in the economically more developed regions of the country (Mesopotamia, Susiana, Margiana, etc.).<sup>14</sup>



FIG. 3. Aerial view of the site of Merv. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)

## Parthian coinage

The Parthian monetary system<sup>15</sup> was based on the silver drachm (weighing about 4 g). Coins were first struck in the reign of Arsaces I, the founder of the state. The main denominations were the tetradrachm (struck in quantity by Western mints) and the drachm (typical of the Eastern mints). Small bronze coins were also issued as change. The obverse side of the drachm usually carried the bust of the king facing left, while the reverse bore Greek lettering around the edge and portrayed a seated figure in nomadic attire with a bow held at arm's length (Figs. 5–10, as identified by D. G. Sellwood in *An Introduction to the Coinage of Parthia*, London, Spink & Son, 1971). The tetradrachms and, in

13. McDowell, 1935*b*.

14. McDowell, 1935*a*; Le Rider, 1965.

15. Sellwood, 1980.

particular, the bronze coins were more varied in type. From the reign of Vologases I onwards the drachm also bore Parthian letters. Starting in the seventies of the first century B.C. the reverse side of coins regularly carried monograms which, in the view of a number of researchers, are abbreviations for the names of mints. Coins struck by the Merv mint, for instance, were marked with the Greek letter 'pi'.<sup>16</sup>

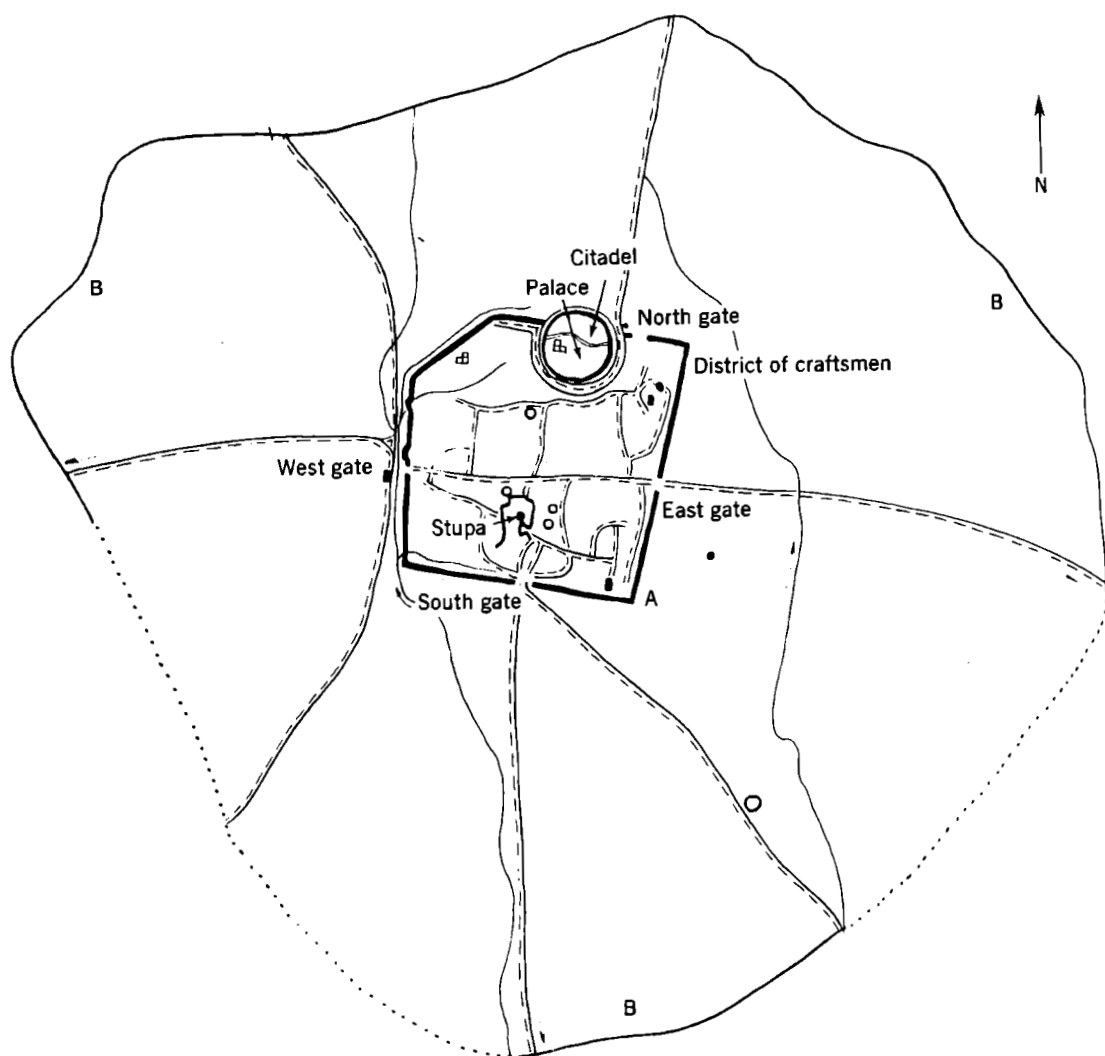


FIG. 4. Merv. Plan of the city: A – Alexandria in Margiana enclosure (Seleucid age); B – new enclosure (Parthian age). (Courtesy of V. M. Masson.)

16. Pilipko, 1980.



FIG. 5. Drachm of Arsaces II (211–191 B.C.).  
(Courtesy of Christian Schaack.)



FIG. 6. Drachm of Artabanus I (127–123 B.C.).  
(Courtesy of M. I. Mochiri.)





FIG. 7. Drachm of Phraates IV (38–2 B.C.).  
(Courtesy of M. I. Mochiri.)



FIG. 8. Drachm of Phraataces and the Queen Musa (2 B.C. to A.D. 4).  
(Courtesy of Christian Schaack.)



FIG. 9. Drachm of Osroes I (A.D. 109–129).  
(Courtesy of M. I. Mochiri.)



FIG. 10. Drachm of Vologases V (A.D. 191–208).  
(Courtesy of M. I. Mochiri.)

## The socio-economic fabric

The question of the character of socio-economic relations in Parthia is extremely complex and cannot yet be regarded as resolved. Parthia did not represent a uniform whole so far as the level and character of socio-economic relations were concerned. Two basic regions are to be distinguished, one being Babylonia, Mesopotamia and Elymais, the other the Iranian uplands, the eastern Iranian steppe and the southern part of present-day Turkmenistan. The differences between the two regions lay in the ethnic composition of the population (with various Iranian-speaking peoples in the east and Semitic-speaking peoples in the west) and in their very distinct socio-economic systems. In the western regions of Parthia, civilizations based on class divisions had been in existence for a long time. In the eastern regions, the switch to a class society only took place at the beginning of the first millennium B.C. In that and particularly in the Achaemenid period, slavery became a widespread practice in the eastern Iranian regions. It seems, however, that the principal influence on the social structure of the indigenous Parthian regions was exerted by the nomadic Parni.<sup>17</sup> Society in the eastern regions of Parthia apparently consisted of three basic social groups which can be defined as classes. The upper class was made up of the *āzāt* (free people), descendants of the nomadic aristocracy of Parni who had become the ruling class in Parthia and filled the top posts in the state administration. In the Parthian army it was they who represented its main striking power as the heavily armed and mailed cavalry. They received the lion's share of the spoils of war and thus had a special interest in an aggressive foreign policy. The second social class consisted of the descendants of rank-and-file Parni. They belonged to the conquerors and so to the ruling class, but they were dependent on the Parni aristocracy. They formed the bulk of the Parthian army, the mass of lightly armed archer horsemen. The position of the mass of the sedentary agricultural population was determined by the fact of the nomadic conquest. Its members were formed into communities, where they personally enjoyed full legal rights. They owned specific property, which they could buy and sell. But they were not considered entirely free, and there was a clear distinction between them and the upper class. They depended on the ruling class, and that dependence was collective. Ancient authors emphasized that in no case could they obtain full personal freedom. Exploitation of that social class was apparent and primarily took the form of payment of taxes. It can be presumed that the prevailing trend in social development had increased dependence of the peasant communes on the state. Another move worth recording was the attempt of the ruling class to abuse its administrative powers for personal ends. This involved exploitation of the producers. At the bottom of the social scale were the slaves,

17. Koshelenko, 1980, pp. 177–99.



but our sources are silent about their position in economic production. In the western part of the Parthian kingdom the level of development of socio-economic relations was somewhat different, and the influence of 'classical' forms of slavery (handed down from the Seleucid period) was more in evidence. The major slave-holding centres were the Greek city-states. Manumission records found in Susa reflect the considerable extent of ancient slavery,<sup>18</sup> while material from Babylonia confirms transactions involving the buying and selling of slaves. Other forms of dependence continued from previous periods, including temporary debt-discharge slavery.<sup>19</sup> It may be supposed that in the Seleucid period it was the rule to make the surrounding rural territory dependent on the Greek city-states. This social institution was also inherited by the Parthians. On the whole, the social structure of society in the western regions of Parthia can be reckoned to have been extremely complex. In contrast to the East, the circle of fully free people was much broader, and included the citizens of the Greek towns, members of the municipal religious communities, the Parthian settlers and possibly a portion of the peasantry. At the same time, slavery was more strongly developed than in the East, and there was a much wider variety of other (non-slavery) forms of dependence.

## The king and his council

The Parthian state system displayed a number of original features that were due to peculiarities of its socio-economic and political development. Most important was the fact that the system emerged from three sources: the heritage of Achaemenid Persia; the principles of Hellenistic statehood under the Seleucids; and the traditional institutions of the nomadic Parni. The king stood at the head of the state, but royal power was regarded as the collective property of the Arsacid family, and only members of the Arsacid family could occupy the throne – a principle that led to rival claimants and frequently involved dynastic conflicts. Written sources record the existence of two royal councils, which seem to have limited the king's power. One, consisting of kinsmen of the king, wielded considerable influence, particularly in matters of succession to the throne. A survival from the time of the Parni, it became an instrument by which the nobility could influence state affairs. The second council, of priests, or magi, seems to have enjoyed less influence. Alongside the Arsacid family, six other noble families played an important role in the Parthian state – an arrangement possibly due to the influence of Achaemenid tradition.

18. Koshelenko and Novikov, 1979, pp. 41–54.

19. Welles et al., 1959.

## Administration

The Parthian administrative system was fairly complex. Part of the kingdom was divided into satrapies ruled by satraps appointed by the king. The rest consisted of vassal kingdoms.<sup>20</sup> The Parthian satrapy was much less extensive than the Achaemenid one. In some cases power over a number of satrapies (usually along the frontiers) was concentrated in the hands of the same person. The lowest administrative unit was the *stathmos* (in Greek) or *diz* (in Parthian), which represented a group of a few villages. The *stathmos* also had a small military post. This administrative unit was headed by a *dizpat*. There was an extensive and developed bureaucracy, as attested by ostraca from Nisa and by the Parthian parchments and ostraca from Dura-Europos. The towns occupied a special place in the system of state rule.<sup>21</sup> The Greek city-states in Parthia were a survival from the Seleucid period. Under the Parthians they formally retained their autonomy though their position changed very much for the worse. Their aristocracy, which had previously consisted solely of Greeks and Macedonians, lost its exclusiveness and was broadly penetrated by members of the local population. The urban system became increasingly oligarchical, popular assemblies declined in significance, and power was concentrated in the hands of a council made up of representatives of a few of the richest families. Less is known of the character and evolution of other types of town. The old Babylonian towns (e.g. Uruk Warka) enjoyed a position in Seleucid times which had made them somewhat comparable to the city-states. Their population was divided into citizens enjoying full rights and the rest, the under-privileged, without such rights. The fully privileged aristocracy formed a religious and municipal commune enjoying a measure of self-rule. These towns also owned a land district. It may be proposed that these religious and municipal communes underwent gradual changes during the Parthian period similar to those affecting the Greek city-states. While sources also speak of 'Parthian towns', in contrast to Greek ones, there is no specific information about their internal life. It can only be conjectured that they did not enjoy autonomy and were under the full control of the local Parthian administration.

Apart from the territories forming part of the royal domain and governed through satraps, much of Parthia consisted of vassal kingdoms. Their role and importance constantly increased as more and more of the states (Persia, Elymais, Margiana, Sistan, etc.) slipped from the direct control of the central government. The Arsacid family turned out to be a palliative. Separatism remained; only its colour changed. What basically fuelled separatism was the very narrow social support for the dynasty. The Arsacids were unable to create a sufficiently broad unity of the ruling classes or to alter the structure estab-

20. D'yakonov, 1961.

21. Kosbelenko, 1979; Sarkisyan, 1952.

lished at the time of the emergence of the Parthian state, in the specific circumstances of the nomadic conquest.

## The fiscal system

The fiscal system of the Parthian state is still inadequately known. What we do know is that there was a general state cadastre for the lands of the royal domain. The state fixed and strictly controlled tax revenue. Records found in excavations at Nisa provide evidence of different types of tax collection, depending on the category of the land. Two categories are known – *patbāz* and *uzbari*. *Patbāz* was collection in kind for the use of the king. It is less clear what the other category was. There are also indications of the existence of special levies for the support of religious activities, somewhat similar to tithes.<sup>22</sup>

## Parthian culture

The study of Parthian culture still requires further research. Until comparatively recently the prevailing view among scholars was that Parthian culture was eclectic, lacking in originality and devoid of a creative basis. Parthian culture developed through the interaction of a number of factors – the Achaemenid heritage, the conceptions of the Hellenistic period, the contribution of the nomadic Parni, and the particular cultural traditions of the peoples who made up the Parthian state. The basic trend in the development of Parthian culture was the synthesis of Greek and local sources. This synthesis, which had started in the preceding period, assumed substantial proportions in Parthian times when the Greek population lost its privileged position. It took many forms and made itself felt in various spheres, notably architecture, sculpture and painting (Figs. 11–13). Parthian sculpture and painting are best known as a result of the excavations at Dura-Europos. They are marked by a particular style, which suggests that this Parthian-Mesopotamian art was one of the sources of early Christian art. Parthian architecture was marked by monumentalism and a break with the traditions of the Greek architectural orders, such styles being used for purely decorative purposes. The most widespread form of artistic craft was the fashioning of terracotta statuettes. They abound in Mesopotamia and Margiana, and provide most important material for the study of popular beliefs. Although the Arsacid dynasty was, on the whole, marked by tolerance, and various religions coexisted in Parthia, there can be no doubt that

22. Koshelenko, 1966b, 1977; Pugachenkova, 1967; Rostovtzeff, 1938; Ghirshman, 1962, 1976.



FIG. 11. Parthian prince from the temple of Shami (second century B.C.).  
(Courtesy of Ahmad Tehrani-ye Moghaddam, Iran-e Bastan Museum.)



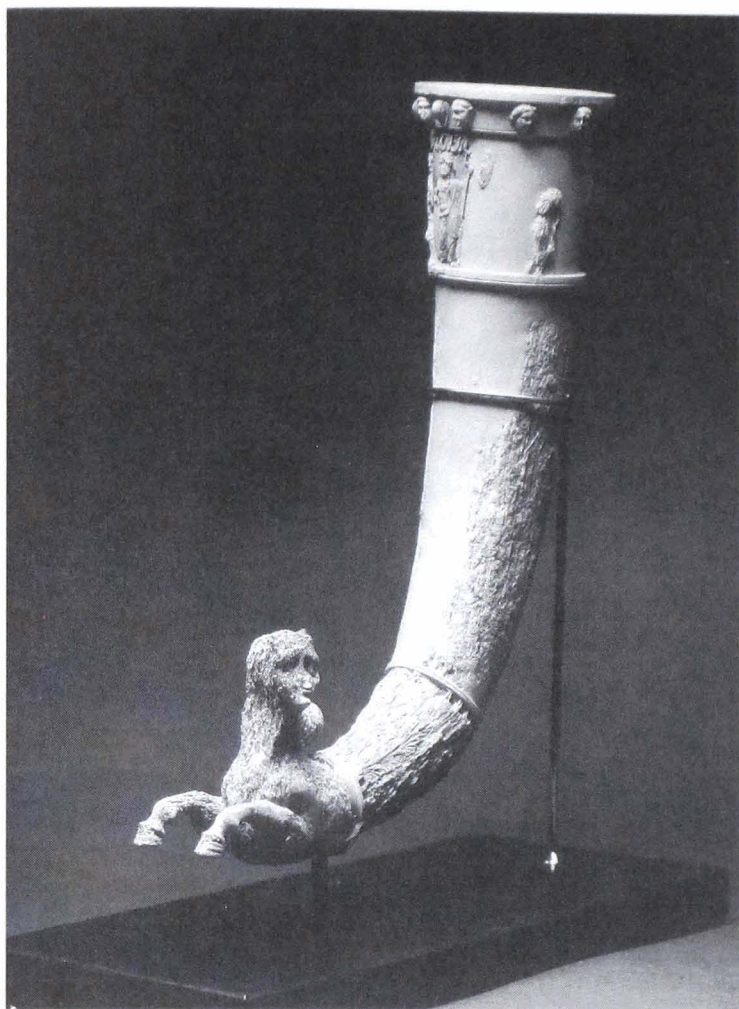


FIG. 12. Nisa. Rhyton. Ivory. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)

Zoroastrianism gradually grew in importance. According to tradition the *Avesta* was first codified under Vologases I. At that time the symbols of Zoroastrianism (in the form of fire altars) first appeared on coins, possibly indicating its adoption as the official religion. In the indigenous Parthian lands the Zoroastrian calendar was also used beside the Seleucid era. Moreover Zoroastrian principles found their way into the official ideology of the dynasty. While royal power initially based its authority on the right of conquest, it subsequently sought its justification in religious sanction. The Parthian period probably saw the introduction of the practice of kindling the coronation fires, which was later adopted by the Sasanians.<sup>23</sup> In the eastern sector of the Parthian kingdom Buddhism was spreading fast<sup>24</sup> and there were Parthian scholars of Budd-

23. Koshelenko, 1971*a*.

24. Koshelenko, 1966*a*, pp. 175–83.

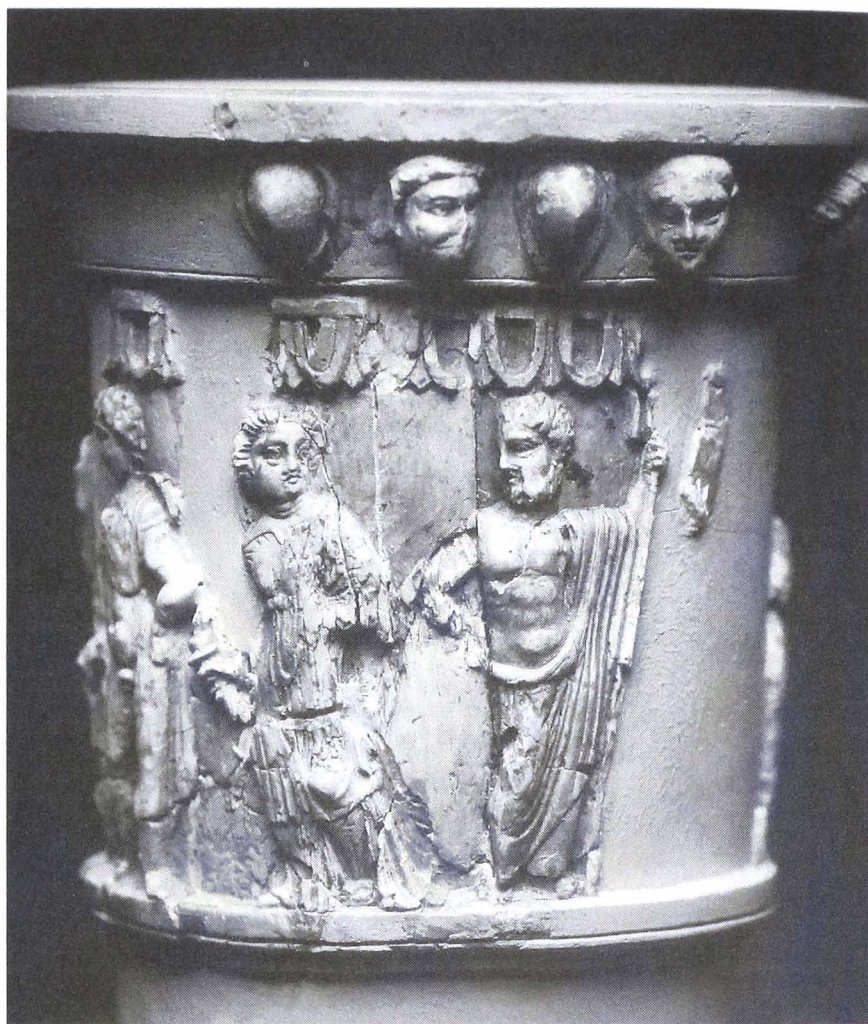
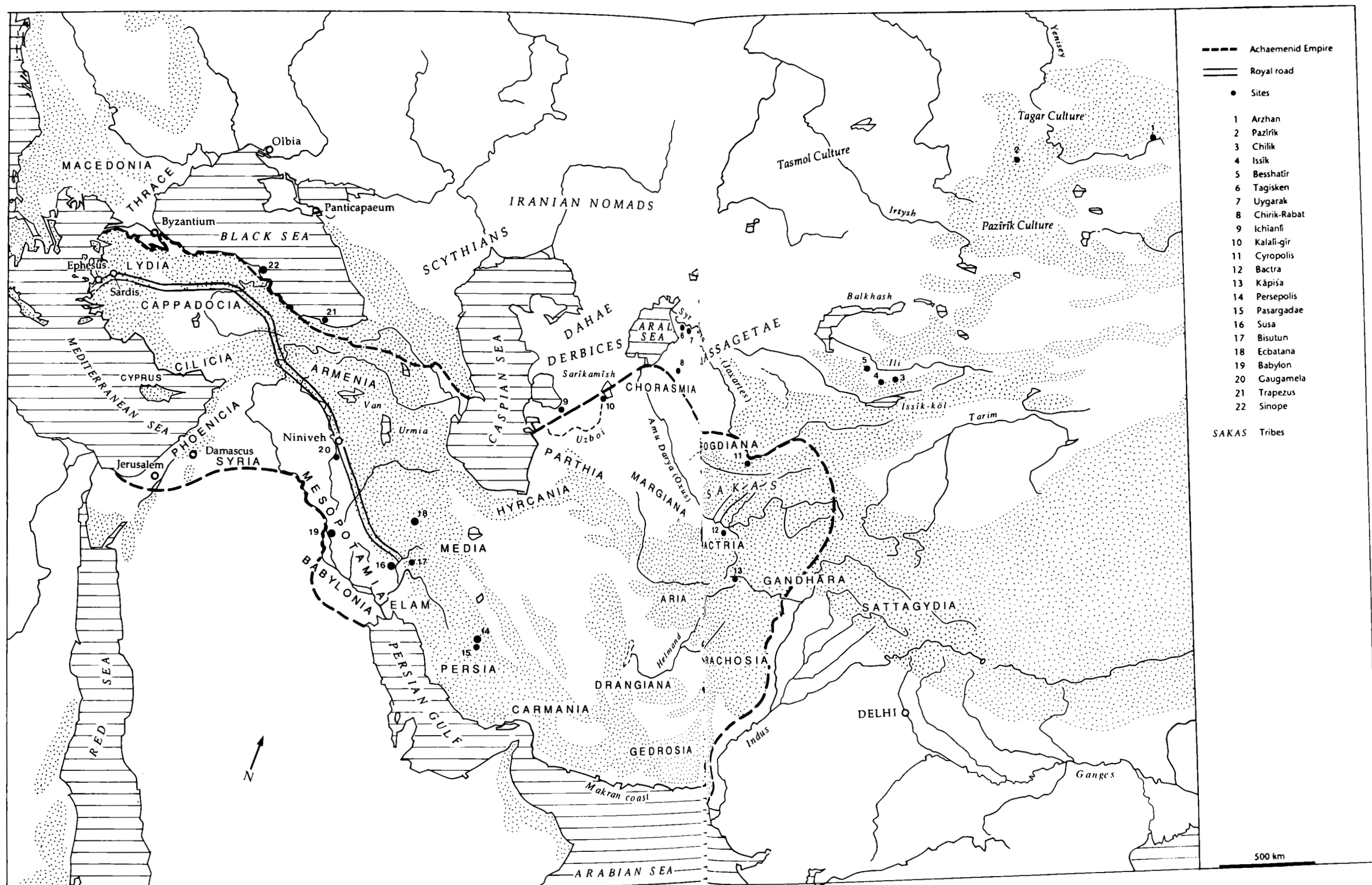


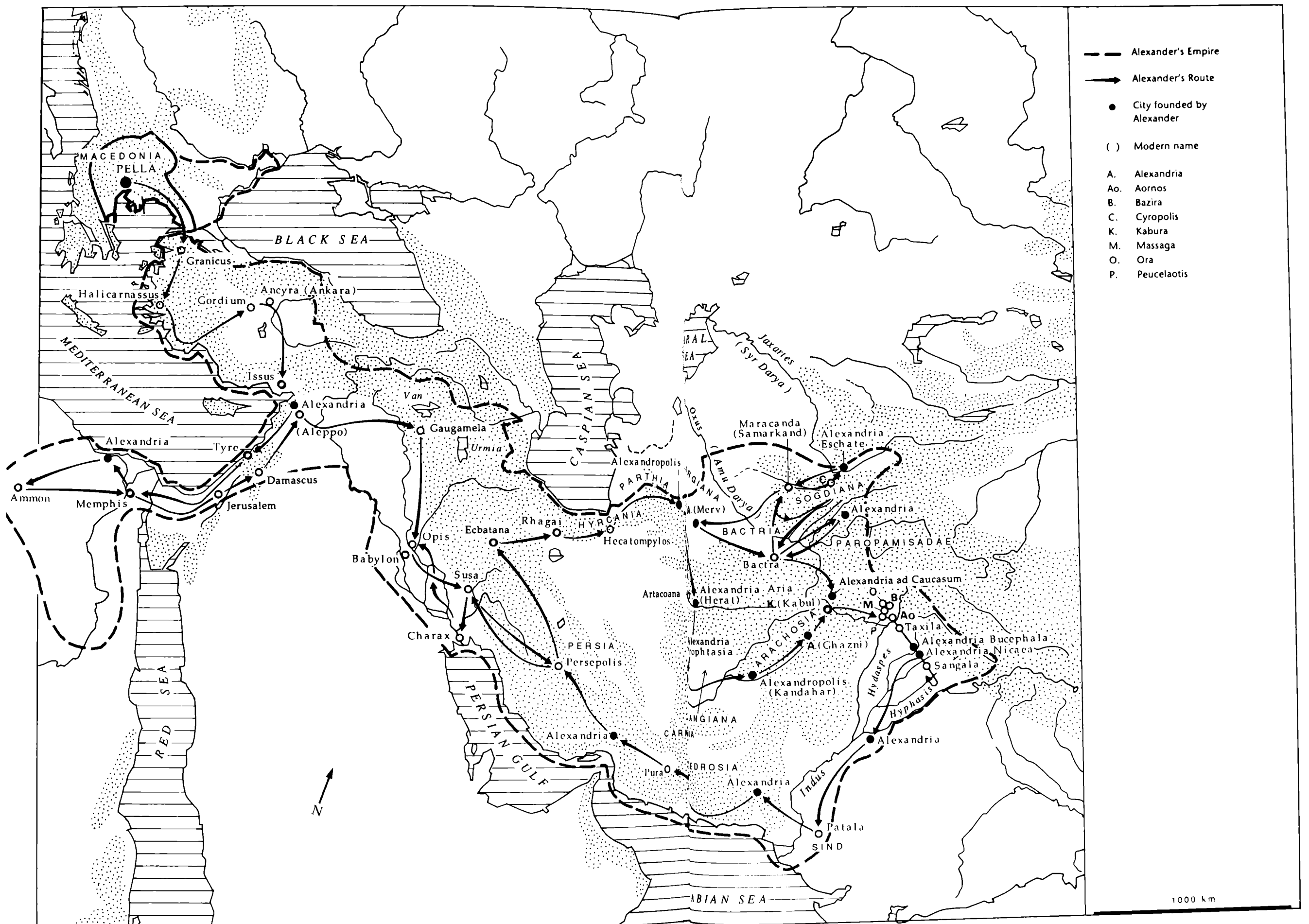
FIG. 13. Nisa. Detail of a scene on a rhyton. Ivory. (Photo: © Vladimir Terebenin.)

hism who went to China and participated in literary and missionary activities. Unfortunately, very little is as yet known about the development of literature. It may, however, be supposed that this was a time when many epic cycles took shape, apparently including the Rustam cycle.

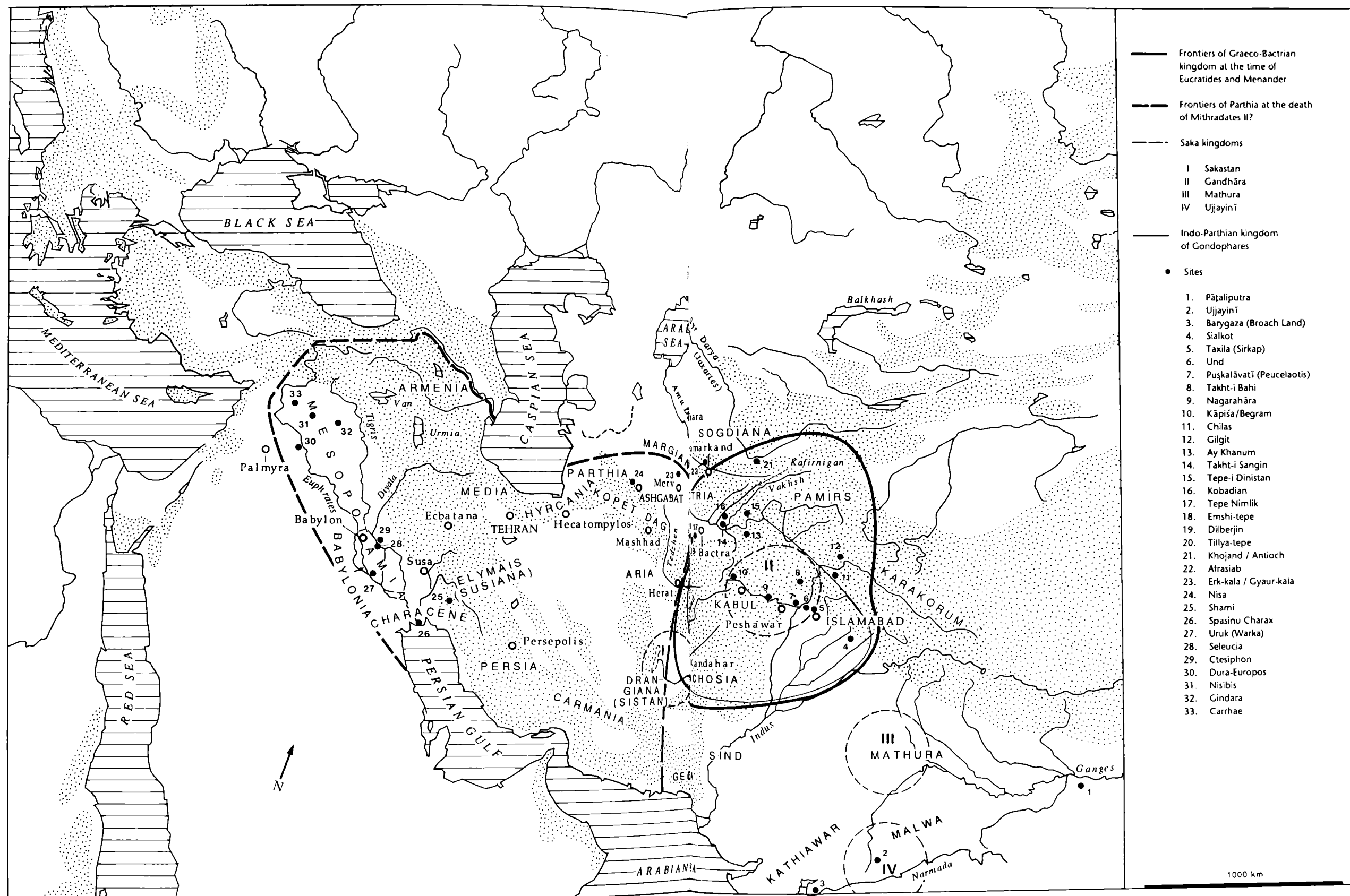




MAP 1. The Achaemenid Empire and the Iranian nomadic tribes of Central Asia.



MAP 2. The campaigns of Alexander the Great in Central Asia.



MAP 3. Parthia, Graeco-Bactria, Indo-Parthia and the Saka kingdoms.

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### ABBREVIATIONS OF PERIODICALS

- AA = *Arts asiatiques*, Paris  
AAH = *Acta Archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Budapest  
Acta Ant. Hung. = *Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Budapest  
AM = *Asia Major*, London  
AO = *Arkheologicheskie otkritiya*, Moscow  
AOH = *Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, Budapest  
AP = *Ancient Pakistan*, Peshawar  
ART = *Arkheologicheskie raboti v Tadzhikistane*, Dushanbe  
AS = *Afghan Studies*, Kabul  
ASIAR = *Archaeological Survey of India Annual Report*, New Delhi  
BCH = *Bulletin de correspondance hellénique*, Paris  
BEFEO = *Bulletin de l'École française d'Extrême-Orient*, Paris  
BSOAS = *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, London  
CAH = *The Cambridge Ancient History*, Cambridge  
CHM = *Cahiers d'histoire mondiale/Journal of World History*, Neuchâtel  
CII = *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Calcutta  
CRAI = *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles lettres*, Paris  
EI = *Epigraphia Indica*, New Delhi  
EV = *Epigrafika Vostoka*, Moscow/Leningrad  
EW = *East and West*, Rome  
IANTSSR = *Izvestiya Akademii nauk TSSR*, Ashkhabad  
IIA = *Institut po izucheniyu arkheologii*  
IIJ = *Indo-Iranian Journal*, The Hague  
IMKU = *Istoriya material'noy kul'turi Uzbekistana*, Tashkent  
IOON Tadz. SSR = *Izvestiya Otdeleniya obshchestvennikh nauk Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoy SSR*, Dushanbe  
IsMeo.R.M. = *Istituto italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente. Reports and Memoirs*, Rome  
JA = *Journal asiatique*, Paris  
JAOS = *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, New Haven, Conn.

- JBBRAS* = *Journal of the Bengal Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*  
*JCA* = *Journal of Central Asia*, Islamabad  
*JNSI* = *Journal of the Numismatic Society of India*, Varanasi  
*JRAS* = *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, London  
*KhAEE* = *Khorezmskiye arkheologo-êtnograficheskiye êkspeditsii*, Moscow  
*KSIA* = *Kratkie soobshcheniya Instituta arkheologii*, Kiev  
*KSIIMK* = *Kratkie soobshcheniya Instituta Istorii material'noy kul'turi*, Moscow  
*MAIKTSA* = *Mezhdunarodnaya assotsiatsiya po izucheniyu Kul'tur Tsentral'noy Azii*  
*MDAFA* = *Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Afghanistan*, Paris  
*MDAFI* = *Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique française en Iran*, Paris  
*ME* = *Materiali po êtnografii*, Moscow/Leningrad  
*MIA* = *Materiali i issledovaniya po arkheologii*, Moscow/Leningrad  
*MIFAOC* = *Mémoires de l'Institut français d'archéologie orientale du Caire*, Cairo  
*MKhe* = *Materiali Khorezmskoy êkspeditsii*, Moscow  
*MU* = *Materiali Uzbekistana*, Tashkent  
*MYuTAKE* = *Materiali Yuzhno-Turkmenistanskoy arkheologicheskoy kompleksnoy, ekspeditsii*, Leningrad  
*NC* = *Numismatic Chronicle*, London  
*ONU* = *Obshchestvennâ nauka v Uzbekistane*, Tashkent  
*OS* = *Orientalia Suecana*, Uppsala  
*PIIE* = *Polevie issledovaniya Instituta êtnografii*, Moscow  
*RA* = *Revue archéologique*, Paris  
*RN* = *Revue numismatique*, Paris  
*SA* = *Sovetskaya arkheologiya*, Moscow  
*SAI* = *Svod arkheologicheskikh istochnikov*, Moscow/Leningrad  
*SE* = *Sovetskaya êtnografiya*, Moscow/Leningrad  
*SNV* = *Strani i narodi Vostoka*, Moscow  
*TANTadzSSR* = *Trudi Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoy SSR*, Dushanbe  
*TIANTadzSSR* = *Trudi Instituta istorii Akademii nauk Tadzhikskoy SSR*, Dushanbe  
*TMKIATSAKe* = *Trudi mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii po istorii arkheologii i kul'turi Tsentral'noy Azii v Kushanskuyu êpoku*, Moscow  
*TNIYaLI* = *Tuvinskiy nauchno-issledovatel'skiy institut yazika, literatury i istorii*, Kyzyl  
*TP* = *T'oung-Pao*, Leiden  
*TrGE* = *Trudi Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*, Leningrad  
*TrGIM* = *Trudi Gosudarstvennogo Istoricheskogo muzeya*, Moscow  
*TrSAGU* = *Trudi Sredneaziatskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta*, Tashkent  
*Trudi IIA AN Uzb. SSR* = *Trudi Instituta istorii, arkheologii Akademii nauk Uzbekskoy SSR*, Tashkent  
*Trudi IIAE AN Turkmen. SSR* = *Trudi Instituta istorii i arkheologii i êtnografii Akademii nauk Turkmeniskoy SSR*, Ashkhabad  
*Trudi KhAEE* = *Trudi Khorezmskoy arkheologo-etnograficheskoy ekspeditsii*, Moscow  
*Trudi YuTAKE* = *Trudi Yuzhno-Turkmenistanskoy arkheologicheskoy kompleksnoy ekspeditsii*, Leningrad  
*USA* = *Uspekhi Sredneaziatskoy Arkheologii*, Leningrad  
*VDI* = *Vestnik Drevney Istorii*, Moscow  
*VKF AN UzSSR* = *Vestnik Karakalpakskogo filiala Akademii nauk Uzbekskoy SSR*

ZDMG = *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, Wiesbaden  
ZDO = *Zemli drevnego orosheniya*, Moscow

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